

Having thus described the invention, what is claimed is:

1. A contact structure for a sliding switch, comprising:
 - a conductive stationary contact disposed on a base; and
 - 5 a conductive movable contact for electrically contacting said stationary contact, said movable contact being movable along a path between a non-contact position and a make contact position with respect to said stationary contact,
 - at least one of said stationary contact and said movable contact having a
 - 10 protruding portion that provides an electrical interface for discharge of arcing as said movable contact breaks from said stationary contact.
2. The contact structure for a sliding switch as recited in claim 1, wherein said stationary contact is a flat pad.
- 15 3. The contact structure for a sliding switch as recited in claim 2, wherein said movable contact is generally substantially shaped as a cylinder.
4. The contact structure for a sliding switch as recited in claim 3, wherein
20 said movable contact is oriented such that a radius of said cylinder is parallel with respect to said path.

5. The contact structure for a sliding switch as recited in claim 4, wherein
said movable contact having a contacting surface that electrically contacts said
stationary contact when said movable contact is in said make contact position,
said contacting surface having a width measured transversely with respect to
said path, said protrusion having a width measured perpendicularly with respect
to said path,
6. A contact structure for a sliding switch, comprising:
 - 10 a conductive stationary contact disposed on a base;
 - 15 a conductive movable contact disposed to slide with respect to said
stationary contact along a path extending between a non-contact position where
said movable contact is electrically isolated from said stationary contact and a
make-contact position where said movable contact maintains a primary
electrical interface with said stationary contact;
 - 20 a contacting zone defined on said stationary contact that electrically makes
contact with said movable contact when said movable contact is in said make-
contact position; and
an arcing zone defined on said stationary contact that electrically breaks
from or makes said movable contact when said movable contact moves from
said make-contact position to said non-contact position and vice versa, said
arcing zone providing an electrical interface where arcing occurs between said
stationary contact and said movable contact,

wherein said stationary contact and said movable contact are mutually shaped and oriented such that when said contacting zone is projected along said path onto said arcing zone, at least a portion of a projection of said contacting zone lies outside said arcing zone thereby providing a region within said 5 contacting zone which is generally outside of an arcing erosion debris path created by said movable contact as said movable contact slides across said stationary contact.

7. A method for preventing degradation in performance of a sliding switch comprising the steps of:

10 providing a conductive stationary contact disposed on a base;
 providing a conductive movable contact for electrically
 contacting said stationary contact, said movable contact being
 movable along a path between a non-contact position and a make
 contact position with respect to said stationary contact; and
 causing arcing to occur outside said path upon engagement or
15 disengagement between said contacts.